



**We remember
Sister Damien Ammatelli, RSM
1920-2008**

~ a Sister of Mercy for 70 years!

Eulogy by Sister Jeanne Ward

Sister Damien Ammatelli was born Sept. 29, 1920, in Kansas City, Mo. She was christened Dorothy Ann.

Her father, Joseph, was a greatly respected pharmacist who owned a drug store. He was fondly known to everyone as Doc because he dispensed far more than drugs to those who sought his advice. Her mother, Rose Tomasini, created a loving environment in the home that was a gathering place for family and friends. She was an exceptional cook, and taught Dorothy the art of Italian cooking, from which many of us have benefited.

Her parents taught the Catholic faith through example as well as instruction. The oldest child of Joseph and Rose was a daughter christened Mary Madeline. The family considered Mary's cerebral palsy a challenge from God, and always treated her like they treated everyone. Mary was about six-years-old when Damien was born, and the family celebrated this new addition to the family.

From her earliest years, Damien learned love of life and of all humanity. She absorbed the spirit of welcoming and hospitality.

Damien's brother, Francis, arrived about nine years later. He became a well-respected internist in the Kansas City area. Damien

was very close to her only brother, and in a real sense was a soul mate with him. I was struck reading a commentary in the Kansas City Star at the time of his death that highlighted Francis' 40 years as a beloved physician to literally hundreds of people, including some of us in this chapel today. A number of people were quoted, and I couldn't help but notice that these people could have also been talking about Damien:

"He lived a holy life of service without ever talking about it."

"To know him was to have a beautiful story in your life."

"He was very humble. He was open to everyone's ideas. There was a uniqueness and profoundly genuine nature to the man."

It is somewhat intimidating to stand up here and pay tribute to the person who first taught me the ropes of being a Sister of Mercy. In September of 1959 I was one of 32 young women, many just out of high school, who initiated Damien into the experience of shepherding Postulants and Novices through the formation process.

It is amazing how she was able to transition from various roles of being superior, teacher, principal and leadership in the community; to guiding young and naïve women through the early years of discernment about whether God was truly calling us to a life of commitment to prayer

and service of the poor, sick and uneducated.

Under Damien's guidance, a number of us chose to leave the community and pursue other vocations. Many of these women have stayed in touch with Damien through all the years to this very day. They will tell you how Damien's love and guidance helped shape their lives.

Next year, four of us will celebrate our 50th anniversary of that September day when we arrived on the front steps of the Novitiate from North Dakota, Missouri, outstate Nebraska, and right here in Omaha. We are saddened that Damien won't be here to celebrate with us, but none of us would want her to continue living as she had been these last months and years.

My hope is that she was reliving the memories of her 88 long and faithful years, even as the disease robbed her of the ability to walk, feed herself, and lastly the ability to talk. Until just a few days before she died, she was able to track our movement with her eyes. You could tell by the expression on her face and in her eyes what she wanted to communicate.

I think what she wanted to say to us was not to grieve - though sadness and tears are part of the human condition. But Damien would want us to celebrate with her the fulfillment of her life - the living of her Baptismal promise of fidelity to her Creator - her graciousness and welcoming spirit - her love of food, of laughter, of beautiful music and wonderful operas.

One of my favorite memories of Damien is when she would dress up, wear a wig and perform "opera" for us. And, I believe, even through the pain in my heart at losing her presence with us, that she is at this moment performing opera for the love of her life, the God who called her, and whom she adored.



Suscipe

My God, I am yours for time and eternity. Teach me to cast myself entirely into the arms of your loving Providence, with the most lively unlimited confidence in your compassionate, tender pity.

Grant me, O Most Merciful redeemer, that whatever you ordain or permit may be acceptable to me. Take from my heart all painful anxiety; suffer nothing to sadden me but sin; nothing to delight me but the hope of coming to the possession of you, my God, and my all, in your own everlasting kingdom. Amen.



We shall all
meet in heaven,
Oh, what a joy
to think of it!
--Catherine McAuley